

A Senior Percussion Recital

An Honors Project (HONRS 499)

By

Patrick R. Kruse

Dr. Erwin C. Mueller, Advisor

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Erwin C. Mueller", is written over a horizontal line.

Ball State University

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Abstract:

Near the end of my junior year at Ball State University I began to prepare for my senior recital that would take place in the fall of 2011. As a percussionist, I am required to be familiar with a large number of instruments and to show a degree of mastery on each. Beyond attaining simple technical skill I must be able to interpret the music I play, adapting to various styles, timbres and moods.

The music I chose for this recital displayed my skill on each of the principal instruments of study for a percussionist: mallets, timpani, and snare drum. The recital began with *Recital Solo XII*, a solo for snare drum played with the snares off. The absence of the snares, when combined with the slow tempo, serves to create a somber mood. The use of terraced dynamics creates points of contrast throughout the piece. This piece also creates a challenge for the performer through its use of alternating duple and triplet rhythms.

The next two pieces, *Pine Cone Forest* and *Drum Corps on Parade*, are in stark contrast to the preceding snare drum solo. Both feature a wide assortment of the 26 Standard American Rudiments and are played in a stricter, rudimental style. The placement of accents throughout *Pine Cone Forest* helps to create a feeling of changing meter while simply carrying rudiments over the barline. *Drum Corps on Parade* incorporates a large number of flam and paradiddle passages that require special attention to sticking in order to be played with speed and accuracy.

Prelude and Blues for vibraphone contrasts both with the pieces that precede it and within itself. The first movement creates a soothing, almost ethereal mood through the use of arpeggiated chords and the use of the pedal to create long phrases. Smooth and full of almost continuous sound, the *Prelude* is contrasted with the second movement, the *Blues*, which requires dexterity of the performer to provide the bass line accompaniment while playing the melody. This piece also requires controlled use of the pedal to differentiate between phrases and allow the melody to be heard.

The next selection, *Saëta* for timpani, changes the mood yet again both in comparison to the preceding piece and within itself through the use of changes in dynamics and metric modulation. I chose this piece in small part due to its tempo challenges, but also for its quick movement between all of the drums and the variety of timbres it presents. Carter calls for the performer to strike various areas of the head, creating different sounds that come to be associated with specific notes during each section of the piece.

I chose to end this performance with the first two movements of Ney Rosauero's *Concerto #2 for Marimba and Orchestra*. I wanted to leave the audience with something to remember, and the melodies within each movement are certain to stay with listeners long after the end of the performance. Each movement provides technical challenges through the use of swiftly changing meters and syncopation between each hand of the performer. When coupled with solo interludes, duets with the accompaniment and the near-frantic tempo at the end of the first movement, these make for an exciting way to end a performance.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Dr. Erwin Mueller for his commitment to his students and their growth as musicians. During my time at Ball State, Dr. Mueller has been instrumental in my growth as a musician, pushing me to do my best and never settling for anything less. You have challenged me like few professors have and I am grateful for the chance to study and learn from you.

Secondly, I would like to thank my parents, David and Victoria, who have always been a pillar of support in all aspects of my life. Encouraging me to participate in music from a young age, I would not be where I am today had it not been for their constant support. They have been there for me through my ups and downs, attending every performance possible no matter how small my part. Their dedication means the world to me.

Finally, I would like to thank Mrs. Barbara Mueller for her help in making my performance possible. The way that you see music, not simply as notes on the page, but as something living, has changed how I play. You have encouraged me to put a piece of myself into the music, giving it life beyond the notation on the page.

Process and Reflection

Process:

I began preparing for my senior recital at the end of the spring semester of 2011. I was going to take summer classes, so I had easy access to the percussion studio and was able to practice as much as I wanted. This time in the studio was crucial in overcoming many of the technical challenges present in each piece. Once the fall semester began, I was enrolled in private lessons with Dr. Mueller for an hour each week and practiced between ten to eleven hours each week. As time went on, I performed each piece for friends in order to overcome the nervousness I felt when playing for an audience. I also spent time listening to recordings of the Rosuaro concerto to get a better feel for how my part fit together with the accompanist. In the two weeks before the recital, I was performing each piece or the recital as a whole without stopping to prepare myself to play through mistakes and to increase my endurance.

Reflection:

This recital is without a doubt the best performance I have ever given during my time at Ball State University. It is easy to see how much I had grown as a musician between my first performance and this one, both due to the music selection and confidence in performing it. The amount of preparation put into this performance helped to dissipate much of my usual performance anxiety and replace it with confidence that I could play each piece well and express both the emotions of the music and myself. I had grown from simply playing the notation on the page to expressing the minor nuances that give each piece its own emotion, a skill that all musicians should work to perfect. I hold this performance, of which I am proud, knowing that it was both pleasing to hear and perform, as the culmination of my musical studies and growth at Ball State University.

Patrick R. Kruse

Percussion

In

A Senior Recital

Program Notes

Recital Solo XII

Garwood Whaley has become one of the best known and best selling writer of percussion method books since his first publication in 1965. Two of his books, *Basics in Rhythm* and *Primary Handbook for Snare Drum* have become of the best selling method books in the past decade. Whaley has also received numerous awards for his musicianship and contributions to the field of music, including degrees from the Julliard School, the United States Army Band “Pershing’s Own,” the Midwest Clinic Music Industry Award and for serving as past president of the Percussive Arts Society. This solo, taken from *Recital Solos for Snare Drum*, shows Whaley’s talent for writing solos that require rhythmic precision and attention to dynamics that create musical phrases throughout. Rhythmic precision is especially important as Whaley includes rhythmic passages that alternate sextuplets and septuplets as well as dotted rhythms that create minute subdivisions of the beat. At the slow indicated tempo, the placement of these rhythms create musical phrases that rely on the proper placement of notes at the desired dynamic level to create a piece that is subdued, yet quietly challenging.

Pine Cone Forest & Drum Corps on Parade

John S. Pratt is most widely recognized as the author of the well-known method book *14 Modern Contest Solos for Snare Drum*. Besides being a prolific writer of snare drum music, having written hundreds of solos, Pratt is an accomplished drummer as well. A long career of playing, judging, composing and contributions to percussion music culminated in Pratt’s induction into the Percussive Arts Society’s Hall of Fame in 2000. Both of these selections were meant to be played at a march tempo, lending to their rudimental style. Each solo also makes use of varying dynamic levels to create a sense of phrasing throughout. *Pine Cone Forest* makes greater use of grace-note rudiments and rolls than *Drum Corps on Parade*, often placing them at the beginning or end of a phrase. Pratt also pushes many of the rudiments over the barline, causing a seeming shift in pulse to those listening that is quickly resolved in the next measure. *Drum Corps on Parade* works to invoke the sense of a drum corps cadence played while marching, with accents creating a pulse that matches that of a marching drummer. This solo requires near constant use of flam and paradiddle rudiments, which must be precisely played at various dynamic levels throughout. Through the use of accents Pratt again shifts the two pulse near the end to a 6/8 feel.

Prelude and Blues

Ney Rosauro is recognized as one of the most dynamic and original contemporary composers of percussion literature today. He began his percussion studies at the Orquestra Sinfonica Brasileira in Rio de Janeiro. After studying Composition and Conducting at the Universidade de Brasilia, he earned his Masters Degree in Percussion in Germany under Professor Siegfried Fink. Rosauro has published over 50 pieces for percussion in addition to several method books. His *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* has been performed by over 2,000 orchestras worldwide. The first movement of *Prelude and Blues* is comprised mainly of arpeggiated chords that often foreshadow the chord structure of the second movement. This piece presents a challenge in blending phrases together through use of the pedal while allowing the melody to be heard. This is made more difficult through the necessary dampening of specific notes in the middle of a phrase with mallets while the pedal is depressed. The *Prelude* serves as an ethereal introduction to the second movement, the *Blues*, which follows a typical blues bass line in the left hand while the melody unfolds in the right, often finishing over the barline, pushing the piece forwards. Rosauro makes extensive use of accidentals, commonly used in jazz, to create a series of tension-and-release phrases that increase towards the final cadence.

Saëta

Elliott Carter has been a successful composer for vocal and instrumental soloists, as well as small and large ensembles since the 1930s. He has earned two Pulitzer Prizes, as well as the Gold Medal for Music awarded by the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and the National Medal of Arts. This selection, *Saëta*, from *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* is the first work in a series that was first published in 1949. Each piece is dedicated to specific timpanists, with this work being dedicated to Al Howard. Many of Carter's works make use of a technique called "metric modulation," although *Saëta* uses it less than other works in the series, such as *March* or *Canaries*. Metric modulation involves a change in pulse around a common notational unit. This technique allows Carter to create diverse sections with this piece while keeping similar rhythm patterns intact. The real challenge of this work lies in the variety of timbres Carter calls the performer to use. Specific notes are struck in the center of the drum, creating a dull sound with little of the principle pitch present. This leads to natural accents by way of changing timbres throughout the piece, which the performer must take care to maintain.

Concerto #2 for Marimba and Orchestra, Movements I and II

I chose to end my recital with these two movements because the technical demands required of the performer and the excitement created by each movement serve as a dynamic finish to the performance. It is for this reason I chose to play the movements in reverse order, as I felt the first movement, “Water Running in High Mountain,” created a greater sense of finality than the second movement, “Reflections and Dreams,” which creates a more somber mood. This concerto differs in many ways from Rosauro’s first marimba concerto, with frequent meter changes and a greater degree of independence between hands. This hand independence is a crucial part of both movements as each hand is often moving at a different pace than the other, providing a bass line or rolling while the opposite hand plays the melody. This also allows for greater amounts of syncopation in the middle of “Reflections and Dreams” that is reminiscent of sections of “Dance” from Rosauro’s first marimba concerto. Rosauro’s writing style frequently incorporates material from earlier movements, and in the previous case earlier works, reusing and repurposing thematic material in a new variation. “Water Running in High Mountain” invokes the image of a swiftly flowing stream, which is reinforced by the quick tempo and frequent sixteenth-note runs down the marimba. This movement has several distinct sections, all but one of which are reprised in the second half of the movement. Each section has its own unique challenges: the beginning frequently shifts meter in an incredibly quick manner, then moving to the rapid descending lines; the middle section requires the player to provide a consistent bass line under a quick-moving light melody that is interspersed with alternating two-bar passages between the soloist and the accompanist; the final section of the piece is a return to all previously stated material presented at an even faster tempo, creating a feeling of rushing towards the bottom of the mountain. Overall this concerto offers many challenges to the performer as well as many delightful moments to be enjoyed by the performer and audience alike.

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